

An essay on

The chronic Dysentery, as an, frequent disease

to evacuate the body, violent griping and

Respectfully submitted

to the Faculty of the

or of pure blood, then it comes, before, during

and after Homoeopathic Medical College.

of Pennsylvania. the dangerous

If the bowels are on the affected which comes

Twentyeth day of January.

of pure humor, or of mucus mixed with blood

One Thousand Eight Hundred and fifty two.

After the manner by White, of the villous

increted in the small intestines, the discharge

and of Christian Ehrmann.

dangerous humor which has a very offensive

color, and the of Pennsylvania. griping pain

Dysentery is an inflammation of the intestines, especially of the colon and rectum.

The characteristic symptoms are, frequent inclination to evacuate the bowels, violent gripping and cutting pains in the abdomen. The discharges consist either of mucus, or of mucus mixed with blood, or of pure blood; there is tenesmus, before, during, and after the evacuation. There is generally some fever with thirst, and also gastric derangement. If the large intestines are affected, which is most frequently the case, the discharges consist either of pure mucus, or of mucus mixed with blood, or of pure blood; and the tenesmus is more severe after the evacuation. While, if the inflammation is seated in the small intestines, the discharges consist of a dark watery substance mixed with sanguinous mucus, which has a very offensive odor, and the tenesmus, cutting and gripping pains,

which are frequently accompanied with burning
in the abdomen and anus, subside after the
evacuation, ~~as, weak wine, malt liquors, &c.~~

The stools vary in quantity and frequency.
There may be from ten to seventy discharges in
twenty four hours, and in very bad cases, there is
a constant urging and straining, with very little
or no discharge. ~~however, cold especially when~~

~~causes.~~ A predisposition to dysentery is produced by the
continued influence of heat, augmenting the
excitability of the alimentary mucous mem-
brane, disordering the hepatic function, and
relaxing the surface of the body so as to render
it more susceptible to the influence of cold.
Substances directly irritant in their action on
the bowels are frequent exciting causes, among
these may be mentioned, ripe and acid fruits,
or ripe fruits in too large quantities, Vegetables,

and unwholesome and indigestible food of all kinds; acids and imperfectly fermented alcoholic drinks, such as cider, weak wines, malt liquors, &c. &c. Putrid Water, purgatives, Worms, and other accumulations in the large intestines. Exhalations from putrid animal substances, and Vegetable miasma, are also among the causes. Of the exciting causes however, cold especially when combined with moisture is the most common.

How the frequency of dysentery among persons exposed to the cold dampness of night, after having been much heated during the day, ~~is~~ ^{chiefly} owing to the influenza rather than to the disease.

Dysentery is not unfrequently epidemic, prevailing in some instances over considerable extents of country, but more commonly confined within small, and sometimes very accurately defined limits. In this form, it often occurs in different

parts of the United States. It is especially apt to prevail in miasmatic districts, preceding or accompanying intermittent and remittent fevers; but sometimes it cannot be traced to any local cause.

The question has been much agitated, whether dysentery is a contagious disease. It is now almost universally agreed, that it is not so in its ordinary form. In certain confined situations, where many dysenteric patients are crowded together, without due attention to cleanliness, and ventilation, the disease appears to be communicated to others who may be exposed; but the result is probably owing to the influence rather of putrid exhalations, which are acknowledged to be capable of producing dysentery, than to any really contagious effluvia.

Dysentery attacks indiscriminately persons of both sexes and all ages, if one class of individuals

is affected more frequently than another, it is probably owing to their greater exposure to the causes of the disease.

It is much more prevalent in summer and autumn than in winter, and in hot, than in temperate climates.

This depends to a considerable extent on the individual character of the patient, as chronic affections are sometimes roused by an attack of dysentery, which may complicate the disease, and make the prognosis more or less doubtful; although the termination of the disease does not depend exclusively upon this complication, but also upon the severity of the dysentery, and upon the constitution of the patient himself.

As the disease increases, an excessive quantity of putrid bilious substances is expelled from the system, and the patient is extremely debilitated.

All these symptoms may occasion death, if the patient be not carefully treated; and the most unfavourable prognosis has to be given, if a sudden cessation of the intense pain, sunken countenance, coldness of the extremities, a small intermittent pulse, fetal evacuations, which the patient passes without consciousness, indicate the setting in of mortification.

This fortunately happens very seldom if ever, under a strict and skillful Homoeopathic treatment.

The mucous membrane of the large intestines, always shows signs of inflammation in case of death from dysentery. This membrane is swollen, reddened and injected, and not unfrequently ulcerated.

Numerous divisions of this disease have been made by authors, such as: acute and chronic,

mild and malignant, sporadic, endemic, epidemic &c. &c. & offer a formidable array of remedies

But as they are of no practical importance, I shall adopt that division, which has been made according to the character, that the disease may assume, which is as follows:

1. Catarhal, or rheumatic Dysentery.
2. Inflammatory.
3. Bilious.
4. Typhoic, or putrid.

I now come to the treatment of dysentery, commencing with naming the remedies which have been used against the various forms of the disease generally. The principal remedies are: Merc. cor. sub. Merc. sol. Acon. Ars. Aloë. Bell. Bry. Carb. v. Colocy. Chin. Colch. Caps. Cham. Canth. Salic. Ipe. Nux. v. Hep. Pals. Rh. t. Staph. Salph. Salph. a. Phos. a. Nit. a.

and Verat.

This is rather a formidable array of remedies for the cure of one disease; some ignorant Practi-
nist would no doubt say. But to such a one, I will reply, that dysentery is not a constant disease, like Croup, or Pleuritis, where one or two remedies are always positively indicated; but that it assumes different shades in different individuals, and in order to meet those various forms, we must necessarily be in pos-
session of a great number of remedies.

If old school Physicians would pay more atten-
tion to individualization, instead of generali-
zation, they would not be so apt to render
themselves ridiculous, by vaunting a remedy
to the sky as a panacea, which they are forced
to throw aside, in a very short time, as utterly
worthless. Such is the history of the old school

of Medicine!

This subject being well understood by Homœopatists, it is not necessary for me to enlarge

upon it.

Having divided the disease into four classes, I will now give the remedies for each class; but as the different varieties are often to be found complicated or intermixed with each other, it may naturally be supposed, that the same remedies will frequently be indicated.

1. Catarrhal or rheumatic dysentery, is characterized, by drawing and shooting stiches in the muscles, and extremities, tearing in the neck, head, and shoulders. The fever is not very violent, nor are the digestive functions very much deranged. There is pain in the bowels, with tenesmus, the evacuations generally consist of mucus, streaked with blood. This kind of dysentery occurs generally during an

epidemic, but it may also exist as a sporadic disease. It is found endemic in those districts where the locality makes intermittent fever likewise endemic. If the attack can be traced to an atmospheric influenza, the principle remedy is China, especially if the fever is of an intermittent character. If on the other hand, the rheumatic symptoms should predominate, acon. Bry. Cham. Sulc.

Merc. sol. Puls. or Rhus. T. would be indicated, and one or more of these remedies have to be selected, according to their adaptation to the case.

2. Inflammatory dysentery, is characterized by all the symptoms of inflammatory fever, it generally commences with a chill, followed by a dry burning heat, and great thirst, the tongue and skin are dry, and the urine high colored. This kind of dysentery is very similar to enteritis, as the abdomen in both these diseases

cases is hot and distended, and very sensitive to the touch. The patient has nausea, vomiting, and cold extremities. Inflammatory dysentery prevails generally at the end of summer, and the beginning of autumn, when the days are hot and the nights cool.

The first thing we have to consider in the treatment of this form of dysentery, is the fever; for the removal of which we have to administer Acon. in repeated doses. If this remedy does not prove sufficient, Bell. should be administered. When the fever has been subsided by these remedies, one of the following remedies will have to be selected, in order to remove the dysenteric symptoms. Merc. eoz. subl. Merc. sol. Natr. von. or Aloe.

3. Bilious dysentery, is characterized by the fetid smell and putrid bilious nature of the discharges. Bilious and catarrhal-rheumatic

dysenteries are more frequently met with, than any other. They begin with all the symptoms of a bilious fever. The discharges are frequent, and consist of a fetid green or brown bile, frequently mixed with bloody mucus; there is severe colic and tenesmus, with great restlessness. Bilious dysentery is somewhat similar to the inflammatory variety, and occurs most generally as an epidemic disease, at the end of summer, and the beginning of autumn, when the days are hot, and the nights cool.

In this form of dysentery, we shall also have to resort to Acon. in order to subdue the febrile symptoms, afterwards we must administer one of the following remedies, which are more specific for the generality of the case: Cham. Cology. Coch. Ipe. Merc. sol. or cos. sabb. Aloc. or Pals. perception. Cology & this and the Mercurial preparations, would

no doubt be first indicated, but this each individual case will have to decide. In case the disease should become protracted, Sulphur, ought to be administered, either alone, or in alternation with some of the other appropriate remedies. Also, a remedy, as yet not as extensively used as it should be, will no doubt be found a valuable remedy in this disease; for we find in its pathogenetic effects, violent colic with bloody stools; it ought therefore be used in those cases. Other remedies such as Caps. Nitric. a. Hepar. Staph. u. Verat. may also come in play.

4. Syphoid, or patrid dysentery, is characterized by an aggravated state of all the symptoms above described, by great debility, profuse dark and especially fetid stools, dry brown tongue, excessive thirst, very rapid and scarcely perceptible pulse. There is generally violent colic with burning

pain in the abdomen and anus, with severe straining, before an evacuation. The remedies for this form of dysentery are: Arsenic. Aloe.

Carb. veg. Chin. Nux. vom. Phos. a. Nitr. a.
Rhus. t. Salph. a. Mercur. co. subl.

This kind of dysentery, can never occur under a judicious Homocopathic treatment, and it can only be the consequence of a gross neglect of the patient himself, or of an erroneous medical treatment.

The medicine may be administered every one, two, three, or four, hours, according to the severity of the case, but as soon as considerable improvement takes place, the intervals may be lengthened.

In reference to the proper doses, it is sufficient to say, that the experience of a majority of practitioners, is in favour of the lower potencies;

but as many may have been perhaps equally as successful with the higher, it must therefore be left to the discrimination of the physician, to choose what attenuation he thinks best.

The diet in dysentery, must be of a farinaceous nature; all animal food, fruits and Vegetables must be strictly prohibited. Cold Water and ice, in very small quantities, may occasionally be allowed, but the best drink in this disease, is no doubt rice and Barley Water.

Having given a general view of dysentery, it will not, I presume be out of place here, to give a short history of an epidemic of this disease, which prevailed during the last summer and autumn in the City of Lancaster. So malignant was its character, that during the months of July, August, and September, there were from four to six funerals daily, mostly of Children,

all of whom fell victims of Allopathic treatment.
I am happy to say however, that although I
had upwards of sixty cases under treatment
I know but they were generally well in from four
I lost none.

The most constant symptoms, were: slight
periodic diarrhoea. I will relate one case in par-
ticular. The most constant symptoms, were: slight
fever, cutting and gripping pain in the abdomen,
tenesmus before, during, and after coo-
cavation. The discharges consisted generally of sanguineous
mucus, sometimes also of pure blood. For
those symptoms, Mercur. sol. was the specific,
I generally gave the 3rd trit. on grain every three
to four hours. To very young children, I gave
the 4th potess., with the happiest effect.

Where the fever was somewhat considerable, I
gave a dose or two of Aconit. before the Merc.
sol. was administered. Those who applied to me
before they had taken other medicines, were
generally cured with six or eight doses, but if

They had taken for several days castor oil and Laudanum, the remedies generally prescribed by old school Physicians; somewhat more medicine was required, but they were generally well in from four to six days. I had also a few very bad cases of putrid dysentery; I will relate one case in particular.

A young Lady, had been ill with dysentery for five or six days, she had taken during that time repeated doses of castor oil and Laudanum, without any good effect, for she grew worse from day to day, so that at last they sent for me. I found her laboring under the following symptoms: pulse rapid and feeble, fever and chills, dry mouth and tongue, which was coated brown, great thirst, burning from the throat through to the anus, pain in the limbs, severe cutting and gripping pain in the abdomen without intermission,

The latter was very sore to the touch, violent tenesmus, with dark fetid discharges; she had to go to stool nearly every twenty minutes, but sometimes discharged very little. She had taken no nourishment for four, or five days, and was therefore exceedingly weak. This was a very bad case, every body that saw her, despaired of her recovery.

I gave her Aconit. 3. pot. a few doses, which soon relieved the pain, then Mercur. cor. subl. one grain of the first trit. in a half a tumbler full of Water, a tea spoon full of it every hour; this aggravated the burning very much, she said the burning increased after every spoon full of the medicine, but it relieved the pain and tenesmus, and also lessened the frequency of the evacuations.

I gave her then during the night Sact. Lactis, when I saw her the next morning, the burning had nearly subsisted, but the discharges were

still dark and offensive. I now gave her Ars. 6. pot.
and Carb. veg. 10 pot. alternately, every three hours,
which soon changed the evacuation to a sanguineous
mucus. The fetid smell had entirely disappeared,
there was no more barking, the mouth became
moist, there was no more thirst, and she had
also some appetite; she had still tenesmus,
but only during and after evacuation, which
now took place only every three or four hours.
I now gave her Merc. sol. one grain of the
3rd trit. every three or four hours, and as she
improved, at longer intervals; In about five
days, after taking the Merc. sol. she was quite free
of dysentery, only a painless diarrhoea of a thin
yellowish fluid remaining, for which I gave her
China, which cured her in a few days.

I am happy to say, that in ten days, from the
time I first saw her, she was able to be up, and

Lancaster in favor of Homœopathy. To some extent
needed no more medicine.

In several cases, after the sanguineous mucus dis-
charges ceased, there was still tenesmus with dis-
charges of small hard knotty faeces, for which I
gave a few doses of Nux. vom. 8. pot. which cured
them perfectly in a very short time.

In most cases however, or more particularly
in the severer ones, there remained a painless
diarrhoea, of a yellow, or whitish color after the
dysentery had subsided, during which time, they
felt however very well, and had generally a very
good appetite. For those of a yellow color, I gave
Chin. 3th pot. and for those of a whitish Sulphur,
3th trit. which always cured them in a few days.

The striking contrast between the Homœopa-
thic and Allopathic treatment in this epidemic,
was calculated one would naturally suppose to
make an impression among the citizens of

Lancaster, in favor of Homoeopathy. To some extent this has been the case, but only among those, who were already favorably inclined towards it; but who still doubted its efficacy in very acute or urgent cases. Those I say were strengthened in their faith, and are now firm believers in the doctrine of Hahnemann.

But among the mass, who seem to be hardened and blinded, it made little or no impression.

This however can be accounted for; as there are interests existing, which binds them to their old Family Physicians, which they lack moral courage to sever.

It is therefore obvious, that the present generation will have to pass away, before the principle of Similia Similibus, Curantur, will be fully and universally acknowledged as the only principle in Medicine, by which diseases can be

radically cured. That this period will come,
is certain, and that it may soon come, and
that the fruits of our noble System be en-
joyed by the suffering mankind of the
whole World, is the fervent prayer of

Christian Ehrmann.